

# OBS Spotlight –

## Ralph Windsor

By Chuck Jakubchak



*Ralph and his daughters at the trail dedication in Dublin.  
(Photo courtesy of Vicki Moran.)*

Ralph Windsor of Dublin, Ohio spent approximately 30 years helping bluebirds and his commitment to cavity nesting birds resulted in the successful fledging of

thousands of birds. In addition, he inspired his family to care about cavity nesting birds, ensuring that someone would be there to help our precious birds in subsequent generations. It is one thing to devote your own time to help birds, but an entirely greater contribution when you motivate and enlist others to partake in your passion. That is truly a wonderful feat and worthy of recognition in the Spring Edition of the OBS Spotlight.

In 1983 after a fine career as a bookkeeper with the Clark Grave Vault Company in Columbus, Ohio, Ralph retired at age 62. Shortly thereafter, with a little time on his hands and a little restlessness in his soul, he volunteered to build bird houses for Darlene Sillick (former board member of Ohio Wildlife Center). Ralph liked working with his hands and helping Darlene would satisfy his need to stay busy. Plus, Ralph had always enjoyed birds; having built nest boxes for wrens as a youth and maintained feeders at his country home as an adult.

In the early years Ralph was building nest boxes one by one until his friend Charlie Zepp entered the picture and initiated the concept of bluebird box “mass

production”. Ralph and Charlie worked together, cutting 10-20 pieces of lumber at a time and they reduced the production time for a bird house from hours to mere minutes. The increased production efficiency allowed Ralph to help more birds in a shorter period of time and he was able to build and install hundreds of boxes throughout the Dublin area. Should you ever spot a bluebird in Central Ohio, you can probably credit the prolific mass production work of Ralph and Charlie.

Ralph soon expanded his interests beyond simply building and installing boxes to monitoring bluebird trails near his home. Golf courses were of special interest to Ralph because he enjoyed playing the game, but he realized that the courses were great bluebird habitat. He and his wife, Bonnie Jeanne, worked together on the trails and shared many enjoyable, peaceful hours together as they looked after the birds. After the unfortunate passing of his life’s partner in 1999 their children stepped in and accompanied their father as he monitored the trails. Bluebirds became a life teaching tool and Ralph’s bird hobby helped the family develop a deep appreciation of nature, an accomplishment for which he is most proud. Not content with just building bird houses, Ralph diversified and built feeders for both birds and squirrels. Soon he began selling his products to Wild Birds Unlimited and to interested customers. What had started as a volunteer activity to absorb some free time during retirement progressed into a successful small business that Ralph appropriately and wittingly named, “For The Birds.”

The culmination of Ralph’s work with bluebirds came on a beautiful day in March 2009 when a special bluebird trail in Dublin was dedicated to Ralph in honor

of his outstanding contributions. Ralph's daughters (Bonnie, Carol, Sandy and Vicki) donated lumber, Charlie Zepp turned the lumber into boxed sized pieces and Ralph performed the final assembly. A dozen or more friends erected the boxes on a parcel of land and Vicki, along with her husband Brian, agreed to monitor the newly established bluebird trail. Each of the 9 newly, mounted boxes were signed by Ralph and a bronze plaque marked the commemorative trail. A few extra boxes were given to relatives and friends as mementoes of the occasion.

Ralph built homes for birds, but he also spent 7 years building a home for his family. He was a skilled worker and used those talents to provide for his family, not just birds. He volunteered to help birds, but he also volunteered for the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society as he cared about mankind too. Ralph Windsor has always generously donated his time, been dedicated to his family and loved cavity nesting birds. What's not to admire?

Ralph, now 90 years old (and darn proud of it), doesn't get out much now as age has taken its toll and his years of hard work have caught up with him. Thankfully his family has picked up where he left off and they continue to help the birds because of Ralph's inspiration. The birds also continue Ralph's legacy as they remember Ralph's years of dedication, perching on their nest boxes and singing special notes of thanks.

*(Special thanks to Vicki Moran and family for helpful insight regarding Ralph Windsor.)*



*A proud Ralph Windsor.  
(Photo courtesy of Darlene Sillick.)*

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